

**Careers Education 2022/23:**

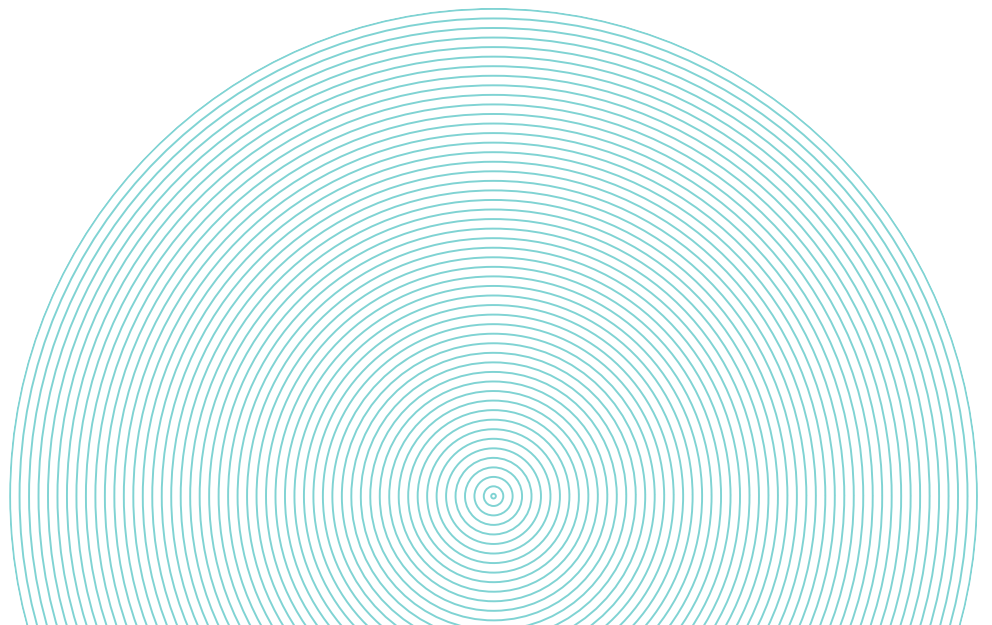
# Now & next

An analysis of careers education  
in England and what this means  
for students, educators,  
employers and society

**March 2024**

# Contents

- p4**    **Key terms**
- p5**    **Foreword**
- p7**    **Executive summary**
- p12**   **Insight 1 - Young people**
- p20**   **Insight 2 - Business and the economy**
- p28**   **Insight 3 - Closing the gap**



# Publication information

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## Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the schools and colleges, special schools, Alternative Provision settings and Multi-Academy Trusts that have reported against the Gatsby Benchmarks and Future Skills Questionnaire and are doing great work improving careers education for young people across England.

Particular thanks to all the Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships and other partners that work with us in delivering the Careers Hub network and supporting collection and use of evidence. We value your support.

Thanks also go to all the apprenticeship and in work training providers who support young people at key transition points.

And finally, thanks to the employers for their commitment and particularly those who completed the Employer Standards, giving us unique insight into their engagement with secondary education.





# Key terms

## Gatsby Benchmarks

These define what world class careers guidance looks like and provide a clear framework for organising the careers guidance provision in schools and colleges. Established in 2013, they are widely understood in the education sector and are enshrined in statutory guidance.

They are:

1. **A stable careers programme**
2. **Learning from career and labour market information**
3. **Addressing the needs of each student**
4. **Linking curriculum learning to careers**
5. **Encounters with employers and employees**
6. **Experiences of workplaces**
7. **Encounters with further and higher education**
8. **Personal guidance**

**Careers education:** A term used in this report to encompass all aspects of careers education – underpinned by the Gatsby Benchmarks framework.

**Careers Hub:** Groups of schools, colleges, employers, and providers within a local area working together to improve practice. Hub Leads oversee the work and target support to local priorities.

**Careers Impact System:** A peer and expert review process based on a maturity model framework for continuous improvement of quality.

**Careers Leader:** A leadership role overseeing a college or school's provision. Careers Leaders implement and quality assure a careers strategy, network with employers and providers and coordinate the contributions of Careers Advisers and subject teachers.

**Career readiness:** Derived from the Future Skills Questionnaire (See FSQ), a student's career readiness is calculated as the proportion of questions they respond positively to. These questions are evidence-based and age-appropriate covering careers knowledge (e.g., about local jobs), skills and confidence.

**Compass:** A digital tool used by schools and colleges to track careers provision against the Gatsby Benchmarks based on approximately 50 questions. The data from Compass forms the basis of this report. Compass+ is an upgraded version which allows Careers Leaders to track individual interventions and cohorts.

**Cornerstone Employer:** Employers in England that provide the employer voice and leadership within a Careers Hub and work nationally, with other Cornerstone Employers, on shared careers-related priorities.

**Equity:** fair distribution of services based on specific needs.

**Employer Standards:** A tool for employers to review their employer outreach against good practice, target their work with schools and colleges and achieve greater impact.

**Enterprise Adviser:** A volunteer from a business matched with a school or college to provide strategic support on the careers programme.

**Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG):** Environmental, social and corporate governance issues that companies oversee and investors consider in their decisions.

**Free School Meals (FSM):** A commonly used measure of economic disadvantage. FSMs are available to children from families in receipt from qualifying benefits ([see here](#) for the full eligibility criteria).

**Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ):** A set of age-appropriate questionnaires for students asking about their career knowledge and skills (career readiness) and their essential skills for the workplace. The FSQ is hosted on the CEC's Compass+ platform, available for mainstream and special schools. Development is underway for future use in other institution types.

**Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs):** a plan which is developed by an employer representative body (ERB) for a specified area.

**Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET):** Young people who are not in Employment, Education or Training.

**Special schools, SEND & AP:** Special schools cater for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); Alternative Provision (AP) settings provide education for students who can't go to a mainstream school.

# Foreword

Memories of past, poor careers experiences persist. However, a vision of modern careers education that is broad, structured and inclusive has taken hold. This is not yet the reality for every young person everywhere, but progress has been made.

Progress against world class standards has doubled in the last five years. 96% of all young people in secondary education had at least one employer encounter last year. Awareness of apprenticeships is higher than ever. All this is driving change for young people and employers alike.

The observations and conclusions of this report are built on the biggest dataset on careers education available. We have been able to capture and triangulate the data from:

We now have deep insight across the careers landscape - from employers, Careers Hubs, schools and young people themselves. Four years' worth of data on student destinations gives us an opportunity to accurately describe how the current system impacts businesses and young people. We can also begin to pinpoint the impact of specific activities on specific students.

Whilst there is undoubtedly more that can and should be done, this data allows us to say, with confidence, that young people and employers in England are benefitting from the systemic reinvention of careers education.

The OECD recently reported the vast majority (95%) of pupils in England were in schools that offered career guidance as part of the curriculum during school hours, concluding "the approach to career guidance in England was more structured than was typical internationally".<sup>2</sup>

This report covers the progress made in careers education in the academic year 2022/23 and what this tells us about where we should go next. During this period, and continuing today, there has been a high level of policy interest in careers education and a growing consensus that the current system is doing a better job of preparing young people for work and life and breaking down barriers to opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

'I was left to make the tea in a boring office. I didn't learn anything.'

'I was told to be an engineer, but I wanted to be actor. Now I am full of regret.'

'It was A-levels or into work. Nothing else on offer.'



>4,500

secondary schools and colleges, reporting progress in careers education



>100,000

students, telling us about their career readiness and essential workplace skills



>340

employers who have shared their self-assessment data about their engagement with education



>1,100

business volunteers who have given us their assessment of the impact they are seeing



Department for Education data on student post-16 and post-18 destinations, its Employer Skills Survey and UCL's Millenium Cohort Study survey responses<sup>1</sup>

1 See Insight 2 for details.

2 Department for Education (2023). [PISA 2022: National Report for England](#). Department for Education: London

3 An [Education Select Committee Inquiry in CEIAG](#) (2023); [Ofsted Independent Review of Careers Guidance](#) (2023); [Holman Independent Review of Careers](#) (2022); [PISA 2022: national report for England](#) (2023), The Labour Party [Break down barriers to opportunity](#) (2023); Lord David Blunkett [Report of the Council of Skills Advisers](#) (2022).



### About The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)

We are the national body for careers education in England, supporting schools and colleges to deliver modern, 21st century careers education. Our mission is to help every young person find their best next step.

To find out more about the impact of The [Careers & Enterprise Company](#), please see our [Impact Page](#), [Value for Money report](#) and our [evidence page](#).

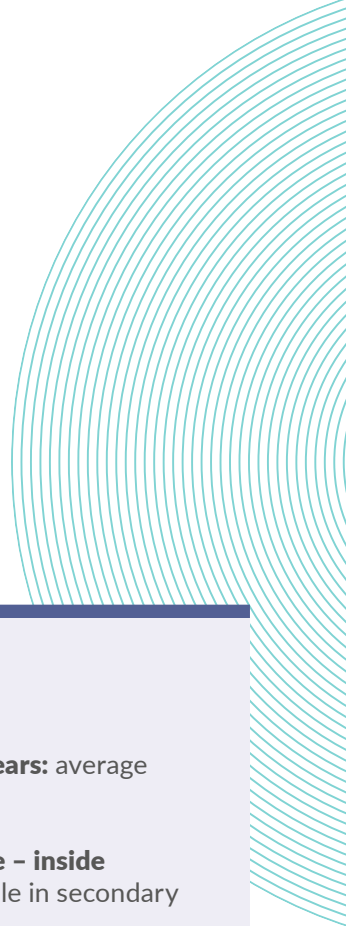
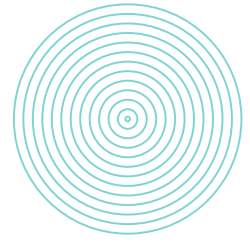


# Executive summary

A national careers system is now in place in England, having been scaled significantly over the past five years. The system has been overseen – with a full range of partners – by The Careers & Enterprise Company, the national body for careers education.

- 92% of schools and colleges are part of a local Careers Hub.
- More than 3,000 Careers Leaders have been trained and all of them are supported by digital tools and resources.
- The eight Gatsby Benchmarks of good career guidance are well embedded and guide the work of educators and employers across the system.
- Current levels of activity are saving the Treasury an estimated £150m per year in reduction of levels of young people who are NEET alone.<sup>1</sup>

The report will establish how schools and colleges are embracing careers education and what this system is delivering for young people – the progress, the gaps and where we need to go in the future. Careers Education now and next.



## At a glance: 5 years of progress

1. **Progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks has doubled in the last five years:** average number of Gatsby Benchmarks achieved rose from 2.1 to 5.5 (out of 8).
2. **Young people are having more touchpoints with employers than before – inside school, outside school and through the curriculum:**<sup>4</sup> 96% of young people in secondary education had at least one employer encounter last year.
3. **Young people are twice as likely to report awareness of apprenticeships** by the time they take their GCSEs.
4. **Benchmarks are driving positive outcomes for young people:** the highest quality careers provision reduces the likelihood of young people being by NEET by 8% (post-16 and post-18); it also increases reported student career readiness.
5. **Employers are seeing direct benefits from engaging in careers education:** 91% of the most engaged employers say it is helping them develop new talent pipelines and is supporting young people to take up careers in their industry.<sup>5</sup>



4 80% schools and colleges fully met Benchmark 5 – Encounters with employers and employees in 2022/23 (24%pts increase since 2020/21). 64% schools and colleges fully met Benchmark 6 – Experiences of workplaces in 2022/23 (28%pts increase since 2020/21).

5 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [From outreach to intake: Employer Standards for Careers Education](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

# What's happening on the ground

## Insight 1

### Young people



#### Now

Young people are becoming more career ready



#### Next

Including teachers and parents more closely in the system will accelerate this

#### High quality careers education is helping young people become more career ready and achieve positive destinations

As students progress through secondary school, their career readiness grows (21%pts increase between Year 7 and Year 11). Empowered Careers Leaders and engaged employers are making a difference.

#### Sustained engagement with Careers Hubs, training and resources improves careers education provision in schools and colleges

Institutions in Careers Hubs the longest achieve the highest number of benchmarks (an average of 6 benchmarks, compared to 4.8 for those who have just joined and 3.2 for those yet to join).

Parents and teachers play an important role in developing students' career readiness and should be supported to make a greater contribution. Emerging evidence suggests there are effective ways of achieving this.





## Insight 2



# Business and the economy



## Now

Careers education improves employment outcomes for young people and recruitment prospects for business



## Next

Employer engagement needs to start early and focus on skills

**The current model positively benefits business and the economy, reducing NEET rates and improving talent pipelines for employers**

Young people in institutions with the highest quality provision are 8% less likely to be NEET than students in other institutions. 83% of employers report that their engagement with education helps them to develop new talent pipelines.

**Good careers education helps young people effectively navigate career choices – balancing personal wants with labour market needs**

The most career ready students are more likely to have ideas about industries they want to work in and less likely to be influenced by perceived gender bias in sectors.

**Our data, gathered directly from employers and young people allows us to pinpoint the impact of specific activities. The analysis suggests that employer outreach should focus on skill development, particularly helping young people through application processes, and starting as early as possible. There is an opportunity to pull this together by reinventing work experiences to focus on measurable outcomes for young people and ongoing engagement.**



## Insight 3



# Closing the gap



## Now

Careers education helps tackle disadvantage



## Next

Remaining barriers to equity should be addressed

### There is a gap in career readiness between the most and least economically disadvantaged young people

The gap between students in receipt of FSM remains consistent across year groups, ranging from 2-5%pts lower than their more 'advantaged' peers. This gap is highest for Year 11 students.

### Good careers provision outweighs the starting disadvantage gap by meeting young people's individual needs

Students in schools with the highest quality careers provision typically have a career readiness score 3.5%pts higher than those with poorer provision. This is higher than the average disadvantage associated with receiving FSM.

**The central mission of improving careers provision everywhere is key to closing the gap. Tailored support for young people facing additional barriers is also important and there is much to learn from SEND institutions. The maturing system has more tools to make this happen including pupil level data, more sophisticated training and more engaged employers.**



# The five best next steps for careers education in England



## 1. Coverage to quality

A more unified careers system, overseen by a national body, has delivered careers experiences for young people no matter where they live.

**Next** we need to deliver quality for everyone, everywhere. Our evidence-based Careers Impact System – a peer and expert review process – will help schools and colleges improve quality and will allow policy makers to be confident that this improvement is continuing.<sup>6</sup>



## 2. Outreach to intake

As a result of investment and focus, there is more employer engagement in schools and colleges.

**Next** we need to focus on the activities that are most likely to get young people into jobs. For all businesses, our Employer Standards helps raise the quality of interactions. Data from the tool is particularly useful for helping small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to target scarce resources effectively.



## 3. Interest to uptake

Appetite for apprenticeships and technical routes is growing but increased awareness does not always lead to uptake.

**Next** we should extend our work with partners to tackle barriers to young people's progression onto apprenticeships and other technical pathways with an emphasis on growth sectors like net zero, life sciences and digital.<sup>7</sup> Our Apprenticeships and Technical Education Transitions Framework helps us do this region by region.<sup>8</sup>



## 4. Margins to mainstream

When careers education is a day-to-day part of school and college life - starting early, involving teachers, parents and the curriculum - it has the most impact. Our Teacher Encounters programme and work with Pfizer and Pinewood Studios, amongst others, to redesign curriculum content shows what's possible.

**Next** we are aiming to reinvent work experience, so that it is ongoing (rather than a one off), connected to key skills and has measurable impact for young people and employers.<sup>9</sup> At its most ambitious, careers in the mainstream means making links to enrichment activities and supporting teachers and parents to play a more confident role in careers education. A number of providers of initial teacher training are adding careers awareness modules to their offer.<sup>10</sup>



## 5. Most to all

Careers education has an important role to play in tackling disadvantage. As the system matures, we need to ensure equity in provision.

**Next** we need to upskill the careers workforce to be as inclusive as possible, supporting all those who work with disadvantaged young people – SENCos, safeguarding professionals, Pupil Premium leads – to have confident careers conversations. We need to continue to engage with and learn from institutions outside the mainstream (SEND and AP). We also need to develop our digital system to include tools that enable early intervention, including identifying young people at risk of becoming NEET with greater precision.

6 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [From coverage to quality: a careers system of continual improvement. Insight Report - progress and quality assurance 2022/23](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

7 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [New national approach to boosting apprenticeship take-up for young people wins £1 million backing from Salesforce](#). Accessed 13th February 2024.

8 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Conditions for transition: Supporting young people onto apprenticeships and technical pathways – a regional analysis](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

9 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2024). [Reinventing work experience](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

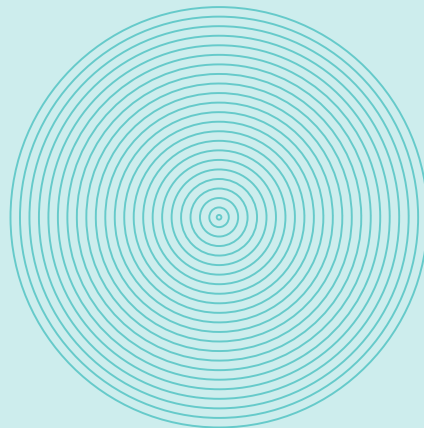
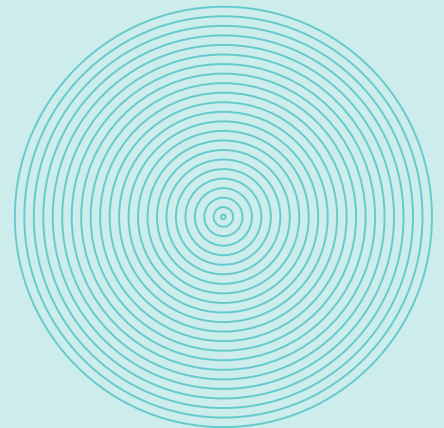
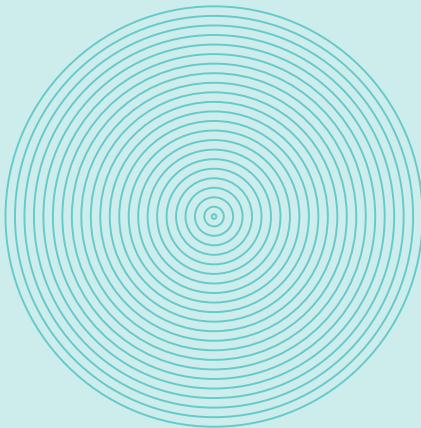
10 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Evaluation of the Teacher Encounters Programme](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

# Insight 1

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## Young people:

Young people are becoming more career ready; including teachers and parents more closely in the system will accelerate this





# Insight 1

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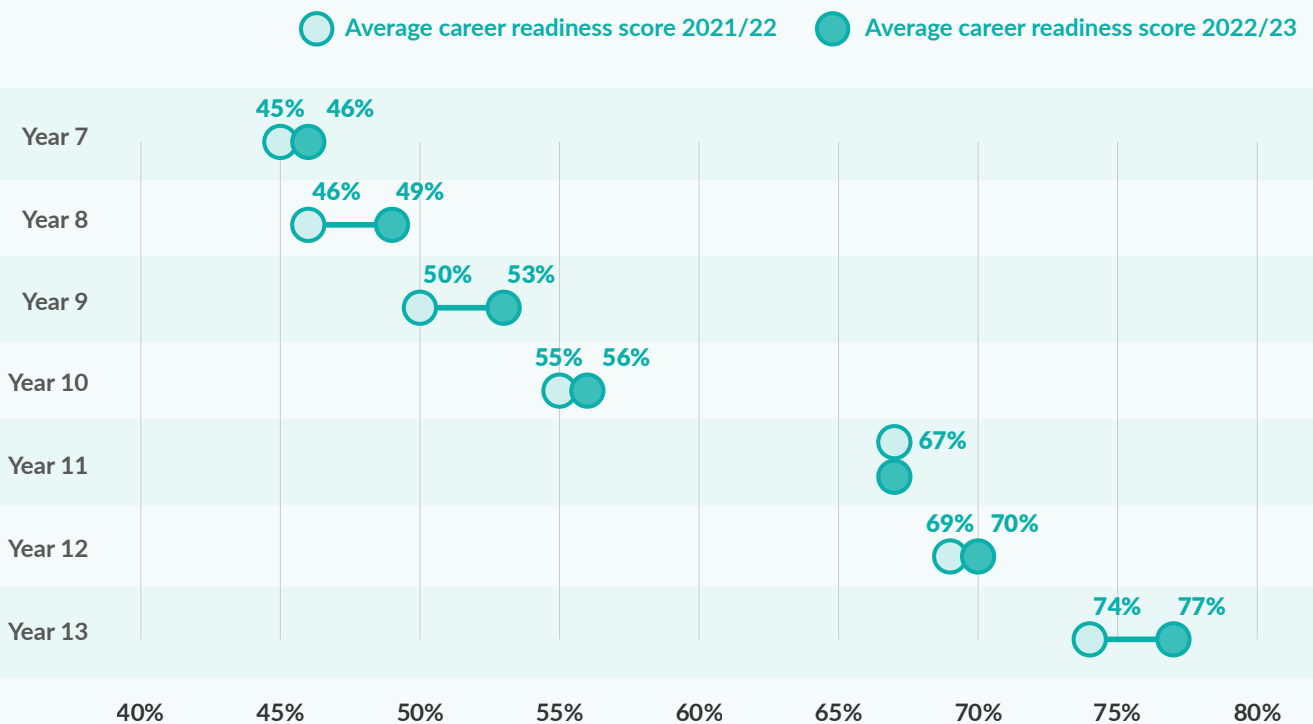
Careers education helps young people feel confident about their next steps, understand the local labour market, develop their essential skills and – ultimately – make the transition to positive destinations. In this section we show how the modern careers system, underpinned by empowered Careers Leaders and engaged employers, helps young people become more career ready. We also explore how, through involving parents and teachers in the careers system, we can accelerate progress.

### Good quality careers education, underpinned by empowered Careers Leaders and engaged employers, is helping young people become more career ready

Last year, using the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), Careers Leaders asked more than 100,000 students a range of age-tailored questions to understand their level of careers knowledge and skills. Taken together the answers give us an age-appropriate career readiness score for each learner. As students advance through secondary school, the data shows their overall career readiness<sup>11</sup> grows (21%pts increase between Year 7 and Year 11). This pattern has been observed at overall cohort level and sustained over two years (Fig. 1).

**Fig. 1: Students' career readiness scores improve across the school journey**

Average career readiness score calculated as the average % of questions students responded positively to



Source: Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ). 2021/22 academic year (n=34,986); 2022/23 (n=101,510)

<sup>11</sup> Career readiness score, derived from students' responses to the career knowledge and skills questions within the FSQ.

<sup>12</sup> Positive if students responded 'Yes, to some extent' or 'Yes, to a great extent'.

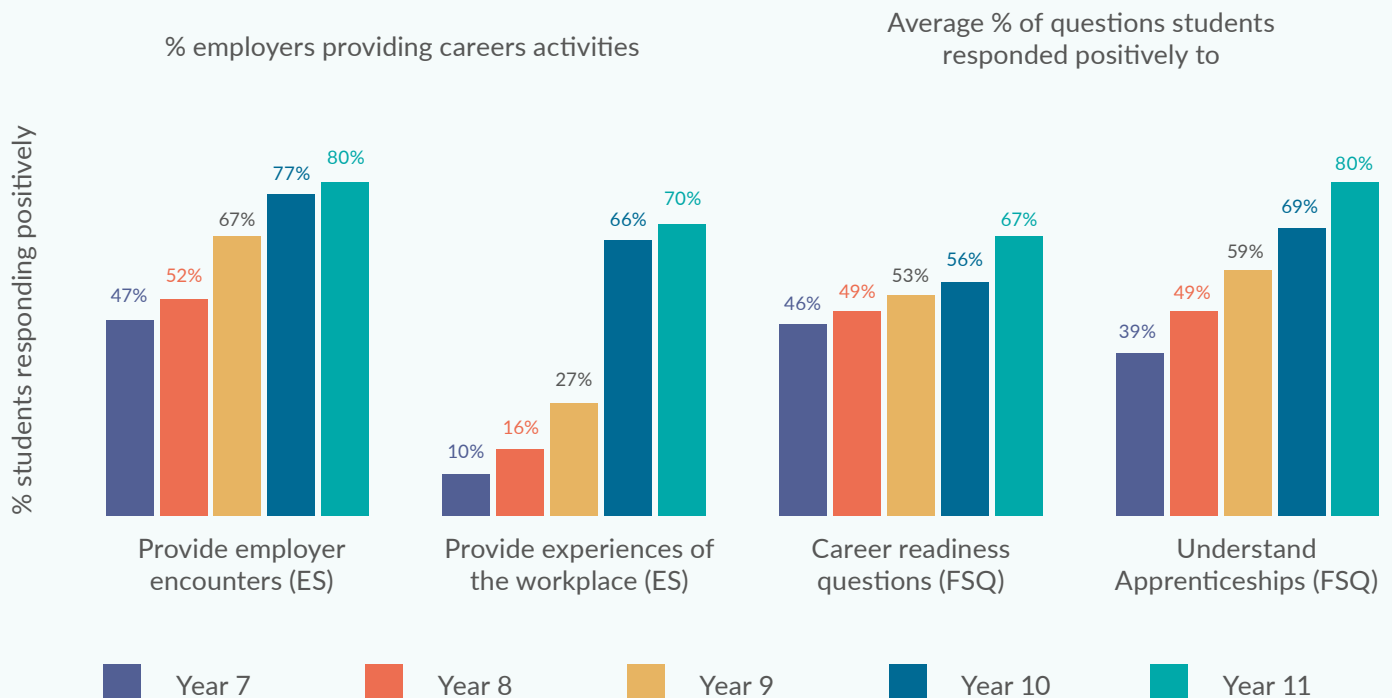
<sup>13</sup> The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Insight briefing: Student career readiness in 2022/23](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

In a complementary analysis, this year was the first opportunity to track individual learner career readiness over consecutive years, based on a sub-sample of young people who completed the FSQ in 2021/22 and 2022/23. On average, these students' career readiness improved by 7%pts between academic years for those in every year group. The biggest improvement was between Year 10 and Year 11, when we know the majority of careers activities take place. The career readiness of this group of students improved by an average of 12%pts.<sup>14</sup> This analysis gives us further confidence in the development of students' career readiness over time.

For young people, this means they have growing awareness of the local labour market, better understand post-16 pathways and have more confidence in transition skills.<sup>15</sup> Barriers to progression onto technical pathways are being mitigated; in particular, young people's understanding of apprenticeships doubled over their time in secondary education (rising from 39% on average to 80% between Year 7 and Year 11) (Fig. 2).

This improvement in career readiness coincides with increased intensity and focus of employer outreach. Self-assessment data from the Employer Standards showed employers increasing their engagement as young people get older and closer to making decisions about their next step (Fig. 2).

**Fig. 2: Employer provision of careers activities coincides with students' career readiness scores and understanding of apprenticeships**



Source: CEC Employer Standards Self-Assessment responses, Apr-Sep 2023 (All employers n=342); Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), 2022/23 academic year (Year 7 n=27,875; Year 8 n=16,058; Year 9 n=21,224; Year 10 n=17,791; Year 11 n=11,238).

14 On average, students' career readiness score in Year 11 (2022/23) (M = [70.6], SD = [21.3]) was significantly higher than their career readiness score in Year 10 (2021/22) (M = [58.2] SD = [21.4], t([1007]) = [-18.1] p = [<0.001]. Again, this finding was statistically significant.

15 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Insight briefing: Student career readiness in 2022/23](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

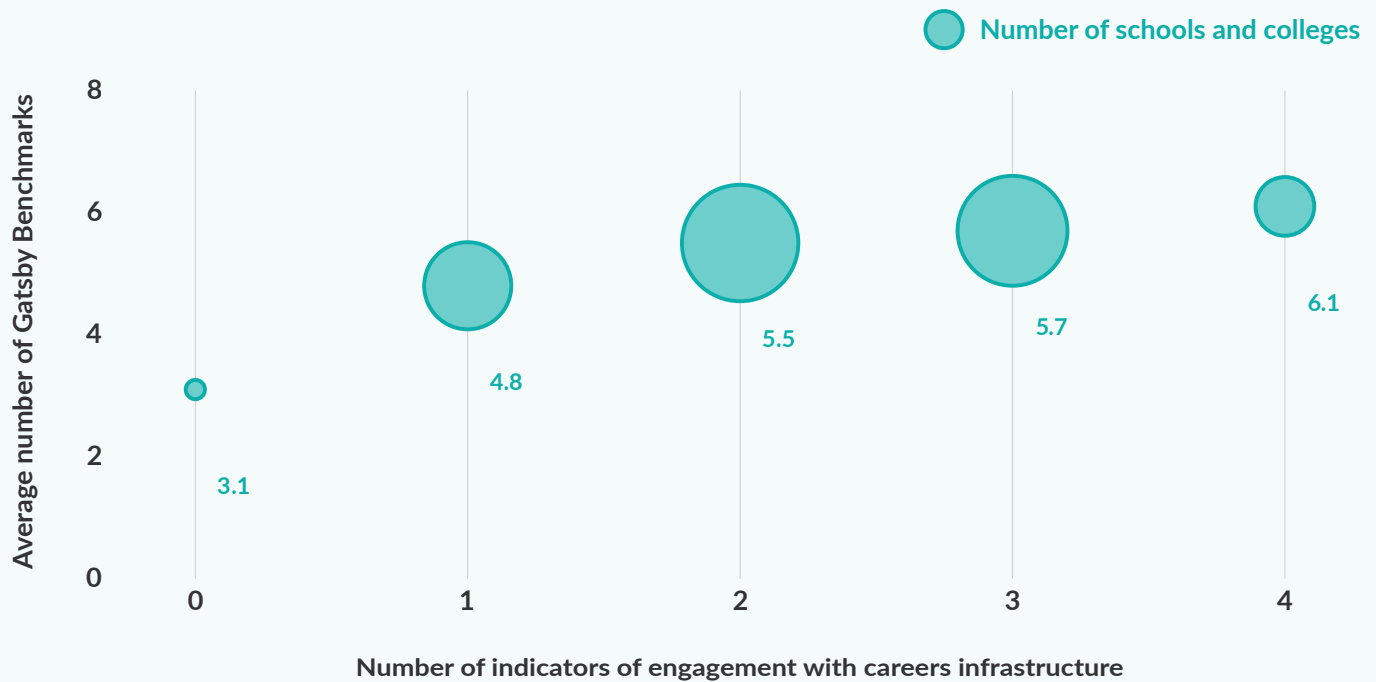
## Sustained engagement with Careers Hubs, training and resources improves the quality and quantity of careers education in schools and colleges

Progress in careers provision has more than doubled in the last five years. Between 2018 and 2023, the average number of Gatsby Benchmarks achieved by schools and colleges rose from 2.1 to 5.5 (out of 8).<sup>16,17</sup>

Each element of the careers system drives up performance. As the number of ways institutions engage with the system increases, their performance – as measured by the Gatsby Benchmarks – improves. Being part of a Careers Hub, completing Careers Leader Training, using the Compass+ digital tool and supporting young people to complete the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) were all associated with higher benchmark scores. The more ways they engaged the better (Fig. 3).

**Fig. 3: More engagement with the system is linked to higher Gatsby Benchmark achievement**

Average number of benchmarks achieved by all schools and colleges by number of indicators (in a Careers Hub, completed accredited Careers Leader training, using Compass+ and using FSQ), 2022/23



Source: CEC academic year-end Compass data, end of July 2023 (n=4,534) (0 indicators n=37; 1 indicator n=759; 2 indicators n=1,356; 3 indicators n=1,208; 4 indicators n=345)

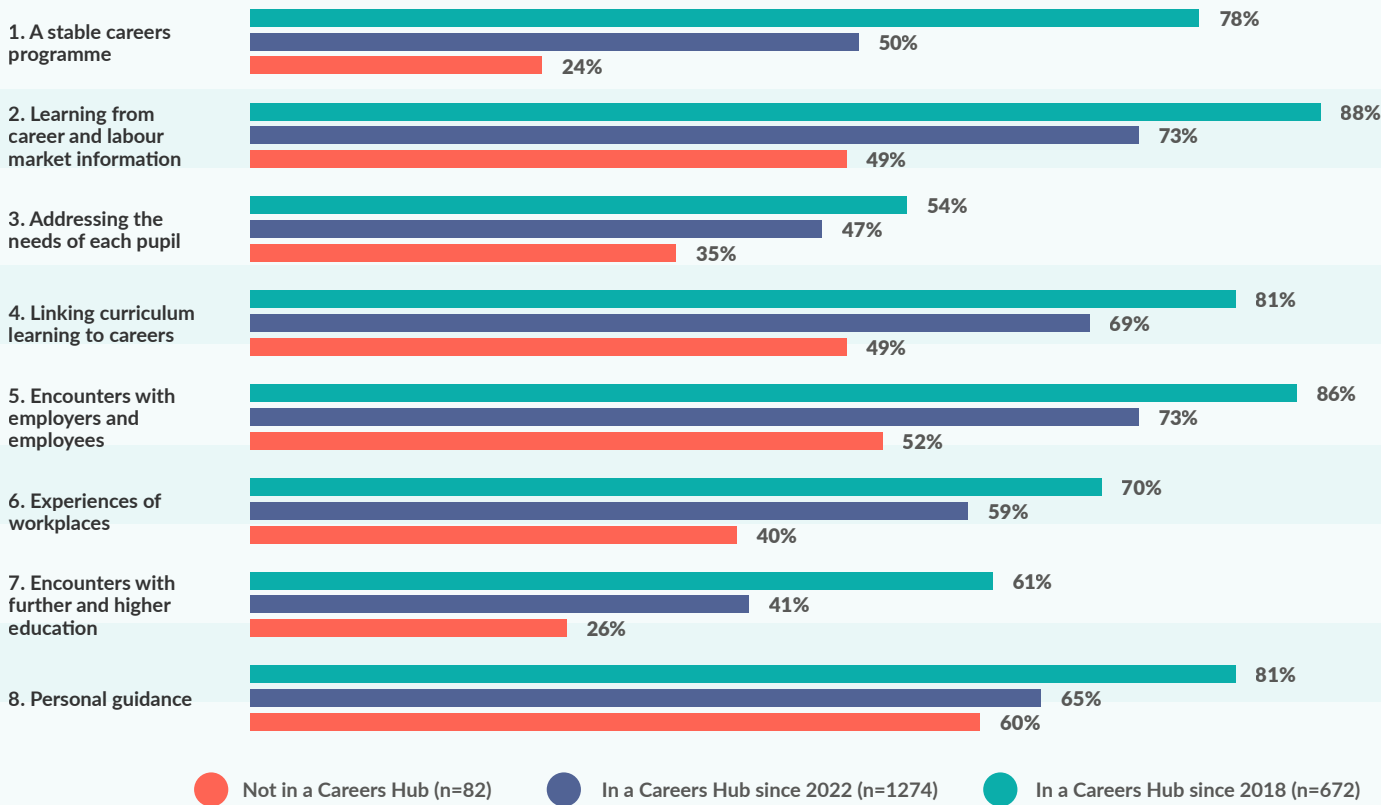
16 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2018). [Careers and Enterprise Provision in England's Secondary Schools and Colleges: State of the Nation 2018](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

17 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Insight briefing: Gatsby Benchmark results for 2022/23](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

For the most benefit, engagement needs to be sustained over the long term. 92% of schools and colleges have now joined their local Careers Hubs, and this membership is linked to higher benchmark achievement. Institutions in Careers Hubs for the longest have the highest performance (achieved on average six benchmarks). Even those joining in the last year significantly outperformed those not in a Hub (4.8 benchmarks compared with 3.2 benchmarks) (Fig. 4).<sup>18</sup>

**Fig. 4: Membership of a Careers Hub benefits schools and colleges, including new joiners**

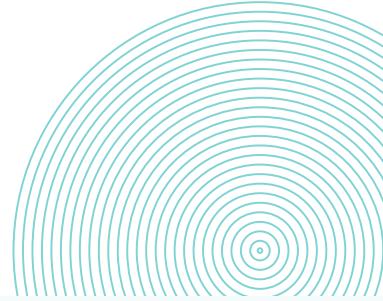
Average number of benchmarks achieved by all schools and colleges, 2022/23



Source: CEC academic year-end Compass data, end of July 2023 (n=4,534)

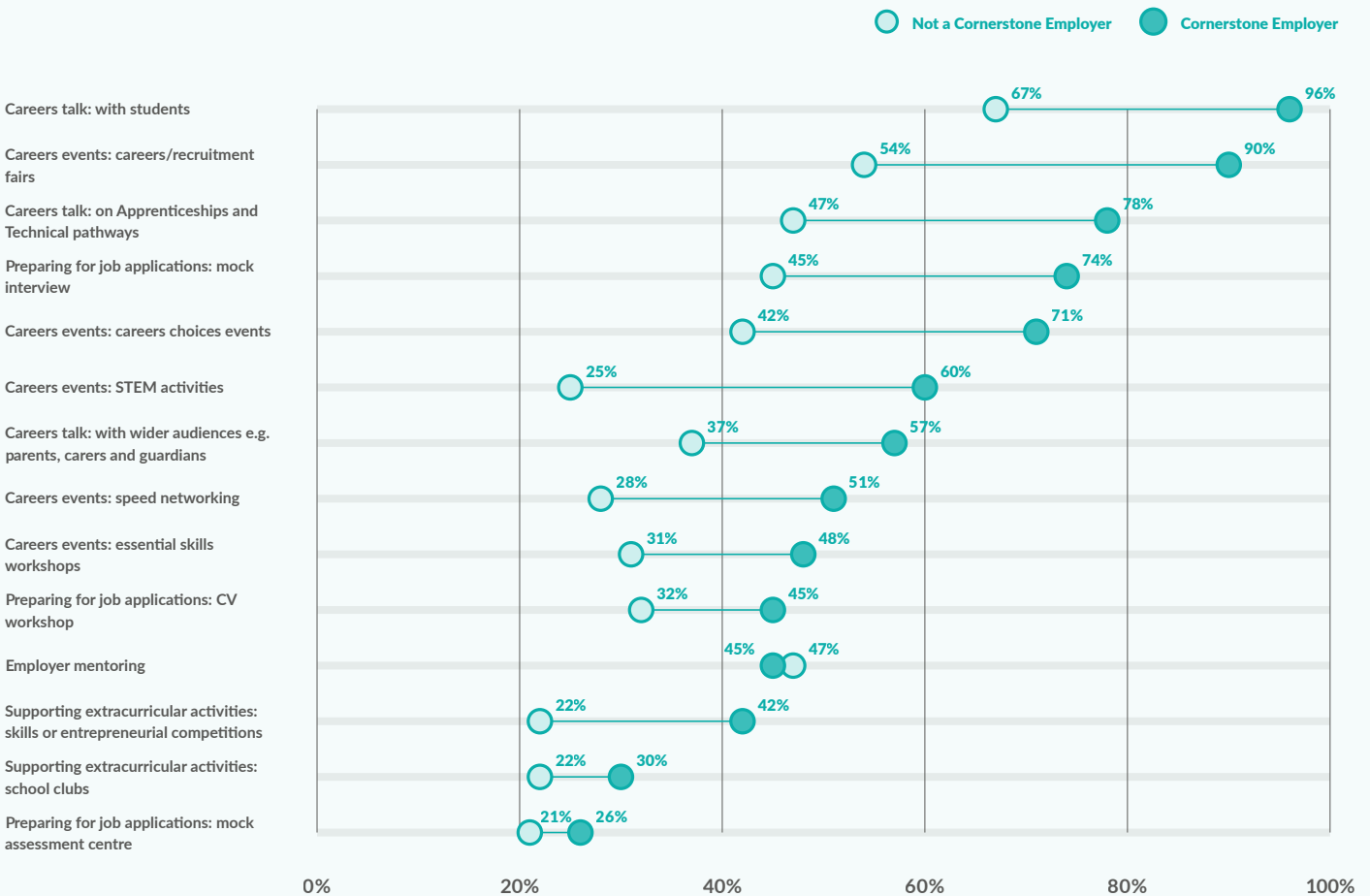


Sustained engagement with Careers Hubs leads to wider and more intensive employer engagement, critical for high quality careers education. Nationally, there were at least 39,778 employer relationships with schools and colleges last year.<sup>19</sup> Institutions in Careers Hubs the longest had more relationships with employers: 86% of schools and colleges in Careers Hubs for the longest time involved ten or more businesses in careers activity, compared with 60% for those in a Hub since 2022/23 and 50% for those not in a Careers Hub. This is confirmed in our data from employers. Those most engaged with the Careers Hub (Cornerstone Employers) were more likely to provide almost all activities with students than non-Cornerstone Employers, including careers talks, STEM activities and mock interviews (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5: Cornerstone Employers report higher levels of careers activity, particularly around careers talks and recruitment fairs**

% of Cornerstone and non-Cornerstone Employers reporting delivering activity, 2022/23



Source: CEC Employer Standards Self-Assessment responses, Apr-Sep 2023 (n=342) (Cornerstones n=223; non-Cornerstones n=119)

<sup>19</sup> Compass analysis based on 4,534 reporting schools and colleges in 2022/23, giving the number of relationships (not the number of employers).

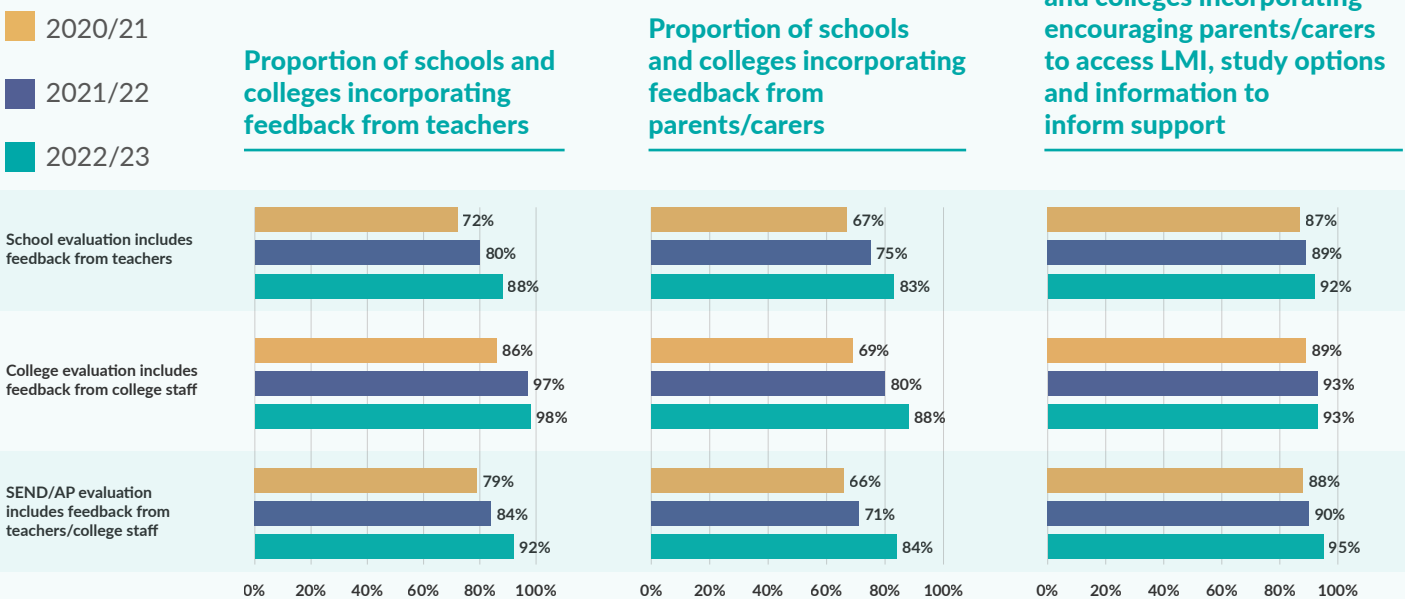
This overall progress is reflected by the views of young people. In the latest Youth Voice Census<sup>20</sup>, the number of students reporting access to all careers experiences increased, with particular rises (10%pts) for those reporting attending careers fairs, accessing mentors and having employers visiting schools. This was mirrored by a 7%pt improvement in the proportion of young people rating the careers education in their secondary school positively. All this reflects an increasingly mature careers system, with the OECD commenting that “the approach to careers guidance in England was more structured than was typical internationally”.<sup>21</sup>

### Including parents and teachers in the system can support students to further develop their career readiness

At its best, careers education is anchored in wider school improvement strategies and plans – a core part of school and college life. In practice this means broadening careers engagement to all key influencers of young people, both in and out of education, and using the curriculum as a reference site for careers learning. Encouragingly, the system is acknowledging and responding to the role of parents and teachers in developing student career readiness. The Gatsby Benchmarks show that schools and colleges are increasingly engaging with parents and carers and wider teaching staff (Fig. 6).

**Fig. 6: Schools and colleges are incorporating feedback from teachers, parents and carers, and encouraging parents and carers to access information and support**

% of schools and colleges fully meeting each sub benchmark



Source: CEC academic year-end Compass data, end of July (2020/21 n=3,893; 2021/22 n=4,200; 2022/23 n=4,534)

20 Youth Employment UK (2023). *Youth Voice Census*. Youth Employment UK: Kettering.

21 Department for Education (2023). *PISA 2022: National Report for England*. Department for Education: London.

Employers are playing their part too. Data from our Employer Standards showed that 41% of employers were engaging parents and 62% were engaging teachers in their outreach.<sup>22</sup>

Teachers are often the first port of call for young people and are keen to improve their knowledge and confidence in supporting careers conversations.<sup>23</sup> In the past academic year, Careers Hubs have worked to include teachers in successful programmes. An example - Teacher Encounters - gives teachers industry experience and enables them to relate this back to their teaching practice.<sup>24</sup>

Parents and carers have a significant influence on their children's career decision making and choices.<sup>25</sup> However, parental engagement is not always the core priority for careers programmes. A survey of 150 Careers Leaders and Education Leaders<sup>26</sup> showed that, while they rated the importance of careers education at 7.9 out of 10, parental engagement received the lower priority rating of 5.7 out of 10.<sup>27</sup> Through the Talking Futures programme Careers Leaders can access training on how to involve parents in career discussions, but there are opportunities to go further.<sup>28</sup>



22 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [From outreach to intake: Employer Standards for Careers Education](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

23 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Evaluation of the Teacher Encounters Programme](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London. 91% of teachers said it had improved their confidence in having careers-related conversations with their students; 78% said their experience of engaging with employers made them better able to deliver their subject.

24 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Evaluation of the Teacher Encounters Programme](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

25 Youth Employment UK (2023). [Youth Voice Census](#). Youth Employment UK: Kettering. 74% of young people reported they accessed careers support from their parents/guardians. 52% rated the support from their parents/guardians as useful or extremely useful.

26 Platypus Research (2022). [Taking a Whole School Approach to Engaging Parents](#). For: The Careers & Enterprise Company: London. Unpublished.

27 Based on a scale of 1-10, where 1 was lowest priority and 10 was top priority.

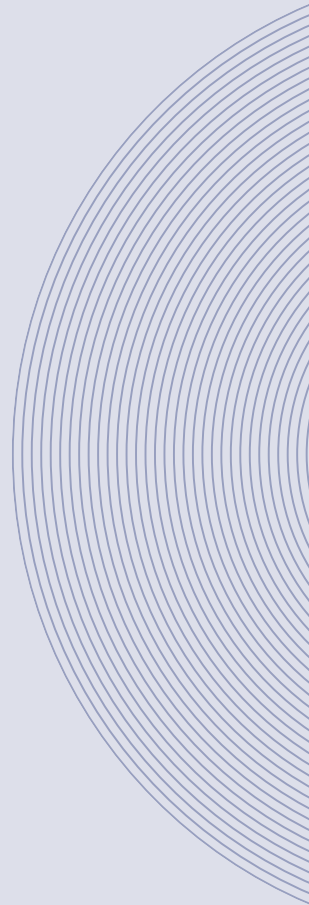
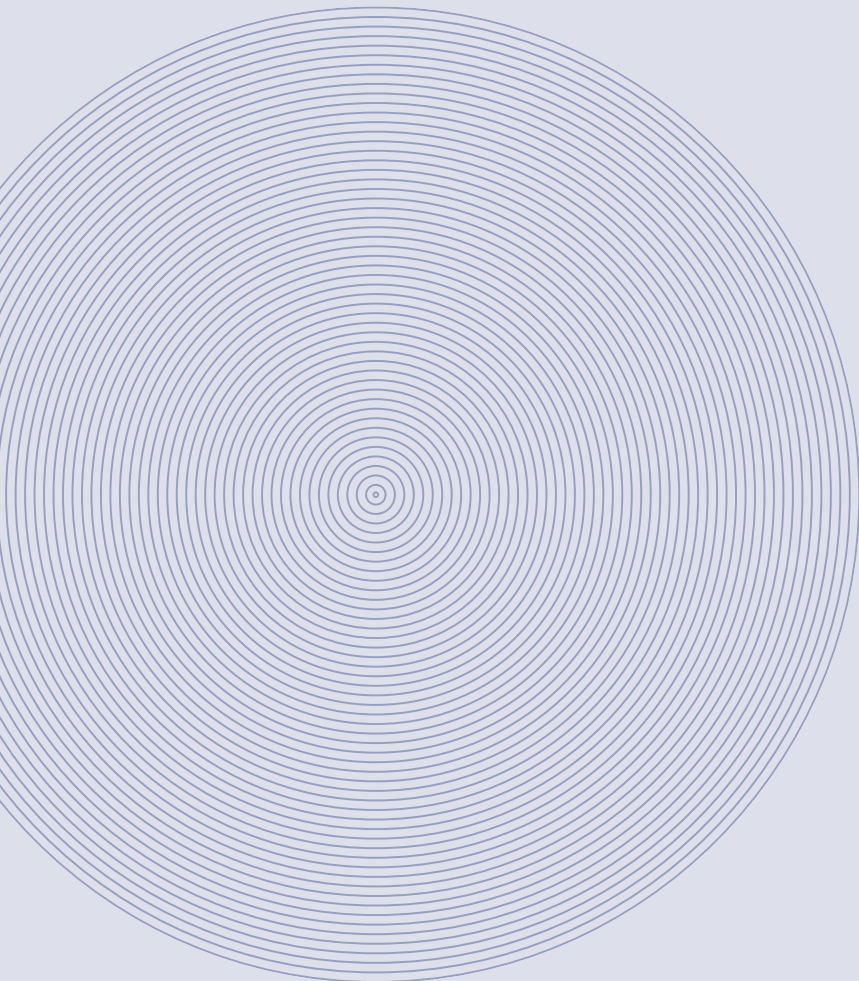
28 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Talking Futures: Bringing parents into career conversations](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

## Insight 2

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# Business and the economy:

Careers education improves employment outcomes for young people and recruitment prospects for business; employer engagement needs to focus on skills and early intervention





# Insight 2

## Business and the economy: Careers education improves employment outcomes for young people and recruitment prospects for business; employer engagement needs to focus on skills and early intervention

High quality careers education creates value for business and the economy. Employers are telling us how their engagement with schools and colleges positively influences young people to pursue careers in their sectors, creating a more informed and skilled talent pool. The careers system is helping young people find sustained destinations for learning, work and training after school.

### Careers education benefits business and society, reducing NEET rates and improving talent pipelines

Last year, we reported an analysis of post-16 destinations which showed students in schools and colleges that achieved all eight Gatsby Benchmarks were 8% less likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET).<sup>29</sup> This year, for the first time, we have been able to explore the impact of high quality careers education on young people's destinations post-18.<sup>30</sup>

On average, post-18 NEET rates<sup>31</sup> decrease from 15.1% to 13.9% for students in schools and colleges achieving all eight Gatsby Benchmarks. These students were 8% less likely to be NEET than those in institutions at the lower end of careers provision.<sup>32</sup> This relationship flattens out at the highest end of benchmark achievement<sup>33</sup>, suggesting most NEET-reduction gains are on average related to the first few benchmarks achieved, especially for students at higher risk of not progressing into work, training or further education after school.<sup>34</sup>

In complementary analysis using the Millenium Cohort Study,<sup>35</sup> a positive link was seen between Gatsby Benchmark scores at Key Stage 4 and students' post-16 destinations. This confirmed previous analysis on post-16 destinations using school-level administrative data, and further strengthens the evidence base for the impact of good careers provision on student outcomes.<sup>36</sup>

High NEET rates have lifetime consequences for individuals, society and the tax payer. Previous analysis from The Careers & Enterprise Company estimated a £42,000 lifetime saving to the public purse from a single 16-18 year old prevented from being NEET, saving the Treasury £150m per year in England.<sup>37</sup>

Employers are finding recruitment benefits, to match young people's career outcomes. 86% of employers said their engagement with schools and colleges was encouraging young people to take up careers in the sector and 83% reported it helped them develop new talent pipelines. Those providing the highest quality engagement were more likely to report these benefits (Fig. 7).<sup>34</sup>

29 Percy, C. & Tanner, E. (2021). [The benefits of Gatsby Benchmark achievement for post-16 destinations](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

30 Department for Education (2023). [Statistics: destinations of key stage 4 and 5 students](#). Department for Education: London.

31 Refers to the proportion of students not in confirmed education, employment, or training (EET), i.e. includes students both confirmed as NEET and in unknown or untraced destinations.

32 This analysis focuses where there are supporting data, specifically those institutions with between 30% and 100% Gatsby Benchmark achievement. The data span institutions with 0 to 8 benchmarks fully achieved.

33 (>80% average benchmark score)

34 CEC analysis (technical note forthcoming)

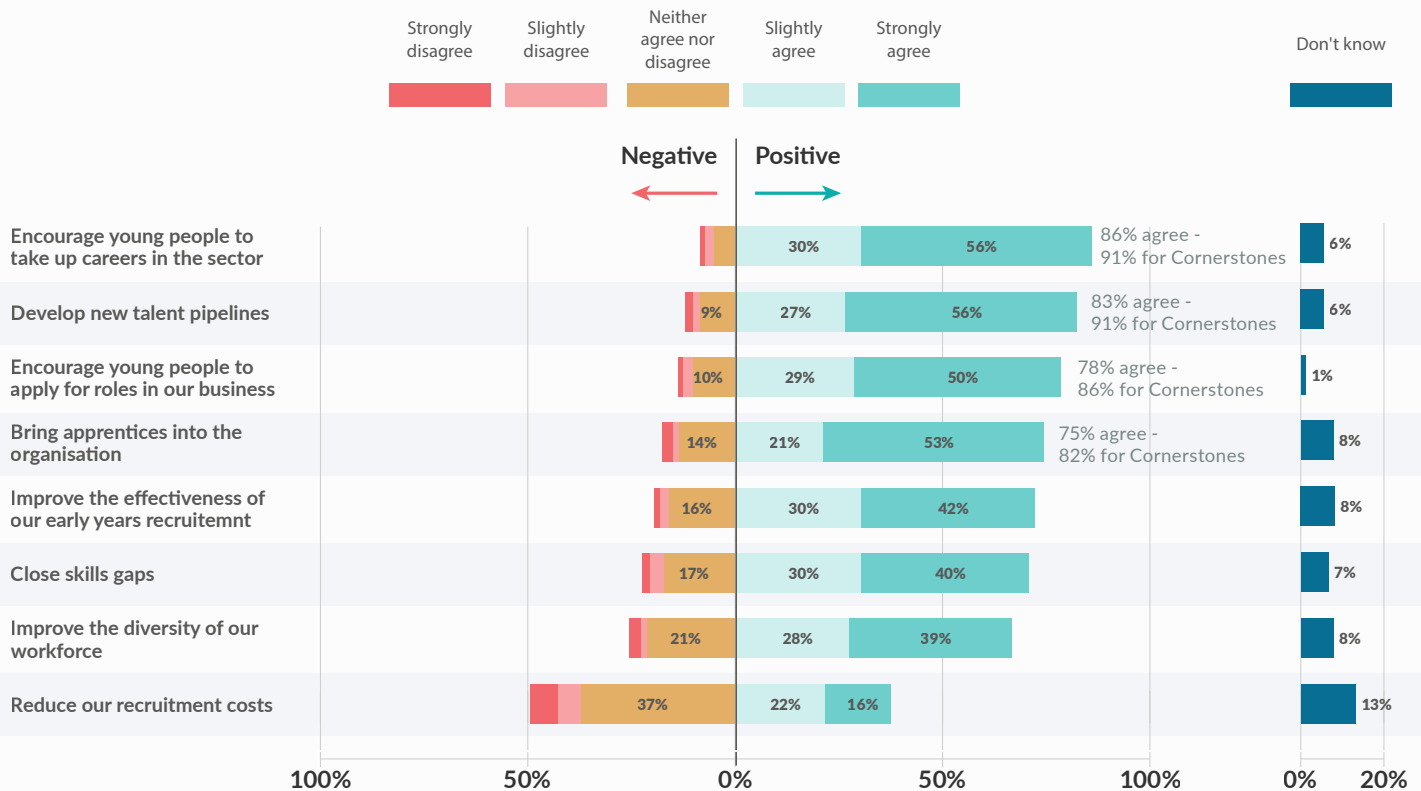
35 UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies. [Millenium Cohort Study](#) CEC analysis (technical note forthcoming).

36 Percy, C. & Tanner, E. (2021). [The benefits of Gatsby Benchmark achievement for post-16 destinations](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

37 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2020). [Personal Guidance in English Secondary Education: An initial Return-on-Investment estimate](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London

**Fig. 7: Employers report benefits to their business based on the level of their engagement with schools and colleges**

% of employers responding on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree, by Cornerstone Employer Status, Apr-Sep 2023



Source: Employer Standards Self-Assessments, Apr-Sep 2023 (All employers n=342)

Responses have been rounded up to the nearest decimal place as such not all answer sets will add up to 100%

### Good careers education helps young people effectively navigate career choices – balancing personal wants with labour market needs

High quality careers education has the power to impact young people's industry understanding and interests. Analysis of student data shows that improved career readiness is strongly linked to improved alignment with the labour market. Students with the highest career readiness (responding positively to all questions) were more than twice as likely to have ideas about the industries they want to work in. These interests were both less likely to be influenced by gender-bias (e.g. girls were keener to choose engineering) and less likely to be in over-subscribed sectors (Infographic 1).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> CEC analysis (technical note forthcoming).

Oversubscribed sector: Share of KS4 student interest is four or more times higher than share of forecast jobs available 2020-35, e.g. Sport & Leisure, Creative & Media, Travel & Tourism. Source for forecast jobs: National Foundation for Education Research led-analysis, accessed via the [Department for Education \(2023\)](#), Gender-biased sector: Industries with two or more times as many male students interested as female students in KS4 or vice versa, e.g. male students for Sports & Leisure or female students for Travel & Tourism. Source: Future Skills Questionnaire data 2022/23.

## Infographic 1: The industry interests of more career ready young people align better with the labour market

Relationship between 100% career readiness score and industry interest, 2022/23



# 2x

more likely to have industry interests



# 2x

less likely to choose both based on gender and in oversubscribed sectors



# 2x

more interest in engineering for female students

Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), 2022/23 academic year. CEC analysis (technical note forthcoming).

These student interests vary by region. Increased interest can be seen in locally relevant industries, suggesting some alignment with local vacancies. For example, the region with the highest proportion of Year 11 students interested in animal care was the South-West (8%) which has more jobs in farming and agriculture (Infographic 2).



## Infographic 2: Year 11 students' industry interests vary by region

% young people in Year 11 interested in each industry, split by region

Industry interest	Average Year 11 (N=11,238)	East Midlands (N=1,166)	East of England (N=698)	London (N=607)	North East (N=521)	North West (N=1,182)	South East (N=2,368)	South West (N=1,565)	West Midlands (N=1,582)	Yorkshire and the Humber (N=849)
Administration	3%	4%	3%	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%
Animal Care	6%	6%	7%	5%	5%	7%	6%	8%	6%	7%
Beauty & Wellbeing	5%	5%	6%	4%	6%	5%	5%	6%	5%	4%
Business & Finance	10%	10%	11%	15%	7%	9%	10%	9%	10%	7%
Computing & Technology	8%	9%	8%	11%	4%	8%	8%	8%	8%	6%
Construction & Trades	9%	9%	9%	8%	11%	9%	8%	9%	9%	13%
Creative & Media	14%	12%	16%	15%	12%	14%	16%	14%	13%	11%
Delivery & Storage	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Emergency & Uniform Services	6%	6%	5%	4%	6%	7%	6%	7%	7%	8%
Engineering & Maintenance	9%	10%	9%	11%	8%	9%	8%	10%	9%	10%
Environment & Land	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	3%	4%	4%	2%
Government Services	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Healthcare	11%	12%	9%	12%	12%	11%	10%	11%	11%	9%
Home Services	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Hospitality & Food	4%	4%	6%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Law & Legal	10%	9%	10%	11%	7%	10%	10%	10%	9%	9%
Managerial	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%	3%	4%	3%	3%	2%
Manufacturing	4%	5%	2%	4%	4%	3%	4%	6%	4%	4%
Retail & Sales	3%	3%	3%	4%	1%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%
Science & Research	8%	8%	9%	9%	4%	8%	9%	11%	9%	5%
Social Care	7%	7%	7%	7%	6%	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Sports & Leisure	8%	9%	7%	7%	7%	9%	8%	9%	9%	7%
Teaching & Education	7%	8%	6%	6%	7%	8%	7%	8%	8%	8%
Transport	2%	3%	2%	2%	0%	3%	2%	3%	3%	2%
Travel & Tourism	4%	5%	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%

Source: Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) (2022/23) academic year (n=101,510)



Analysis of external data sources on skills gaps and vacancies<sup>39</sup> shows that there is regional variation in the industries that struggle to fill vacancies due to lack of skills among applicants. For example, 66% of construction vacancies in the North-West were a skills shortage vacancy in 2022, compared to 38% in London.

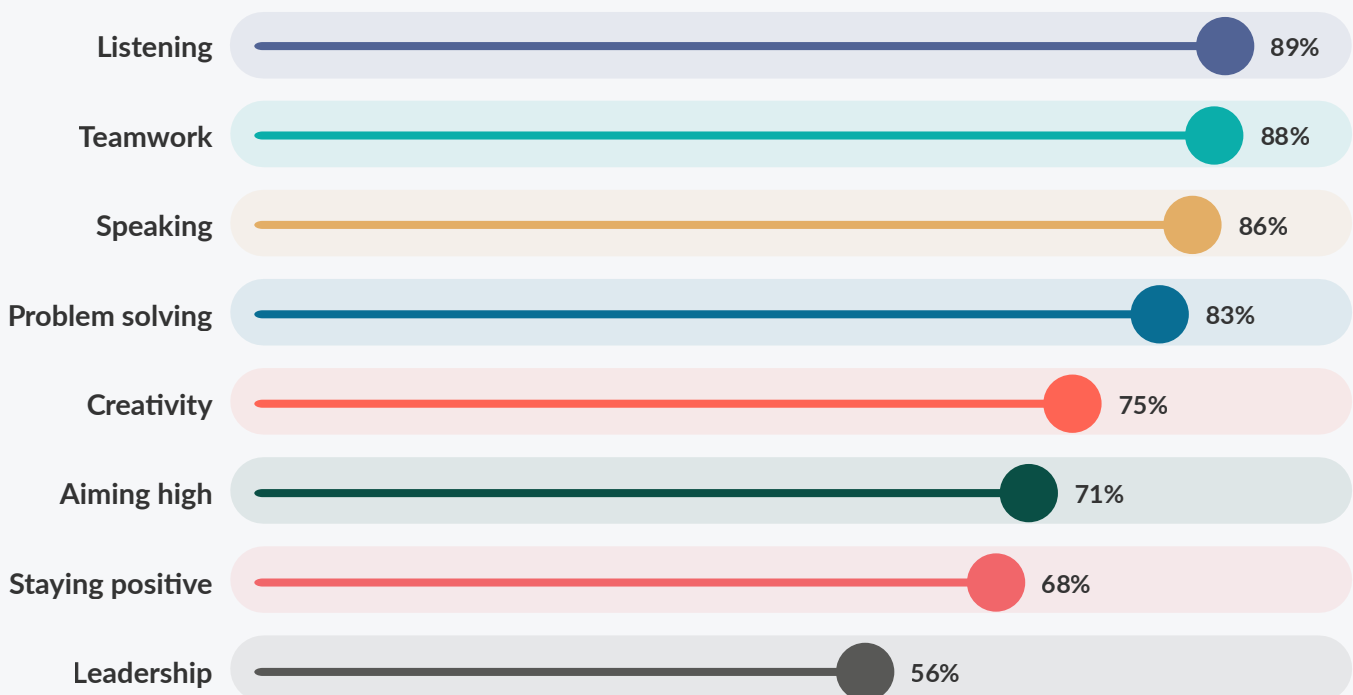
Local areas know where their vacancies are now or are going to be. It is important that work to inspire student industry interest takes place at this local level, using available data and focusing on where gaps are identified. Alignment between Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), Careers Hubs, schools, colleges and employers can fill local skills gaps, using evidence to target collective action.

### There is more to do to help young people build skills, with an opportunity to reinvent work experiences so they work for young people and employers alike

Employers are working with young people to develop their essential skills.<sup>40</sup> Employers were most likely to focus on listening, teamwork and speaking skills (Fig. 8).

**Fig. 8: Employers are supporting young people to develop all eight essential skills from the Skills Builder Framework, especially communication and teamwork**

% of employers responding positively, 2022/23



Source: Employer Standards Self-Assessments, Apr-Sep 2023 (All employers n=342)

39 Department for Education (2023). [Employer Skills Survey](#). Department for Education: London

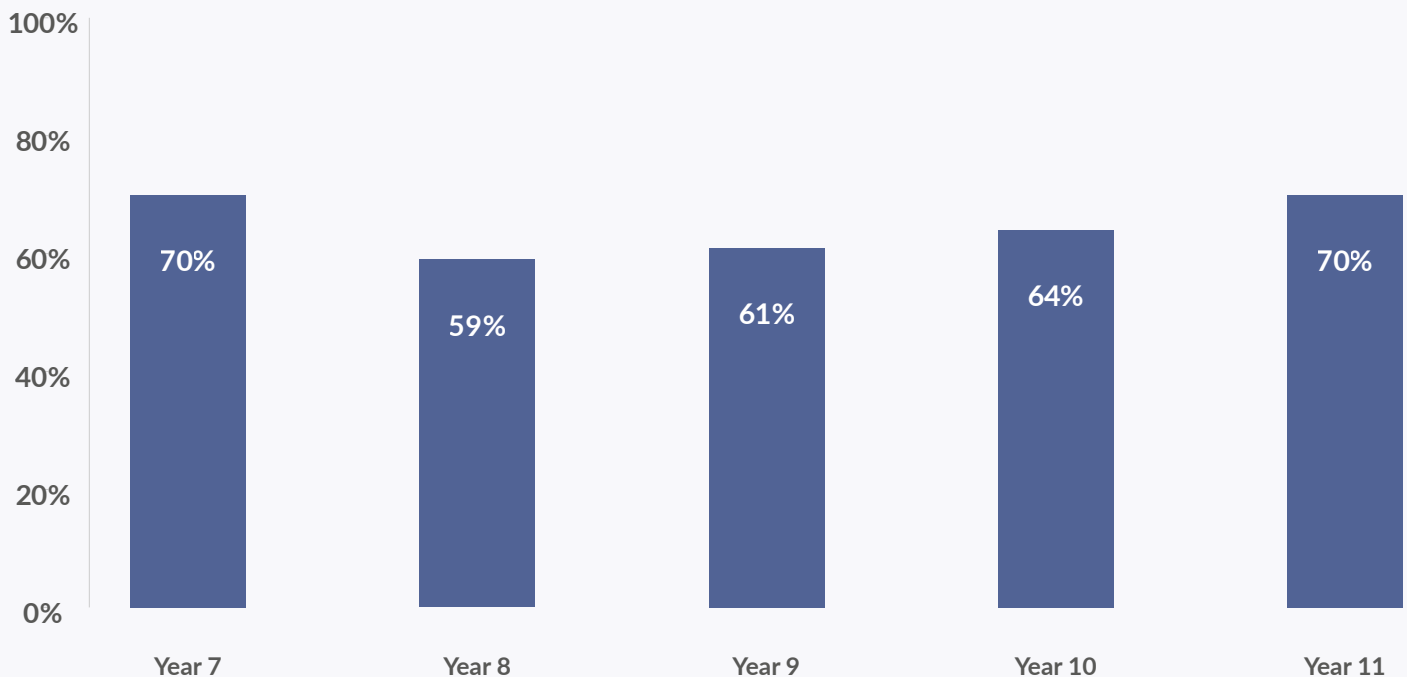
40 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [From outreach to intake: Employer Standards for Careers Education](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

And this activity is having an impact Employer outreach activity can help to close skills gaps. Over two thirds (66%) of employers completing the standards reported that their outreach improved young people's essential employability skills.

Data from young people also suggests employer engagement makes a difference. The proportion of young people meeting the expected skill level dropped in Years 8 and 9,<sup>41</sup> but increased again in Years 10 and 11 when the majority of employer encounters and workplace experiences tend to take place (Fig. 9).

**Fig. 9: The proportion of students meeting the expected essential skill level drops in early secondary, increases during GCSE years**

% of students responding who met the expected age-based skill level, 2022/23



Source: Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), 2022/23 academic year (Year 7 n=27,875; Year 8 n=16,058; Year 9 n=21,224; Year 10 n=17,791; Year 11 n=11,238)

But there is more work to do. Four in ten Year 11 students (41%) do not feel confident talking about their skills in an interview.<sup>42</sup> Employer Standard Five - Preparing young people for application processes - was the one where employers assessed themselves lowest.<sup>43</sup>

41 The FSQ essential skills questions are mapped against the Skills Builder Universal Framework. Each of the eight essential skills in the Framework has 15 steps. As students progress through secondary school, the associated FSQ questions move up the skills builder steps, increasing in difficulty. The questions therefore give us an indication of whether or not students are reaching the 'expected skill level' as defined by the Skills Builder Framework.

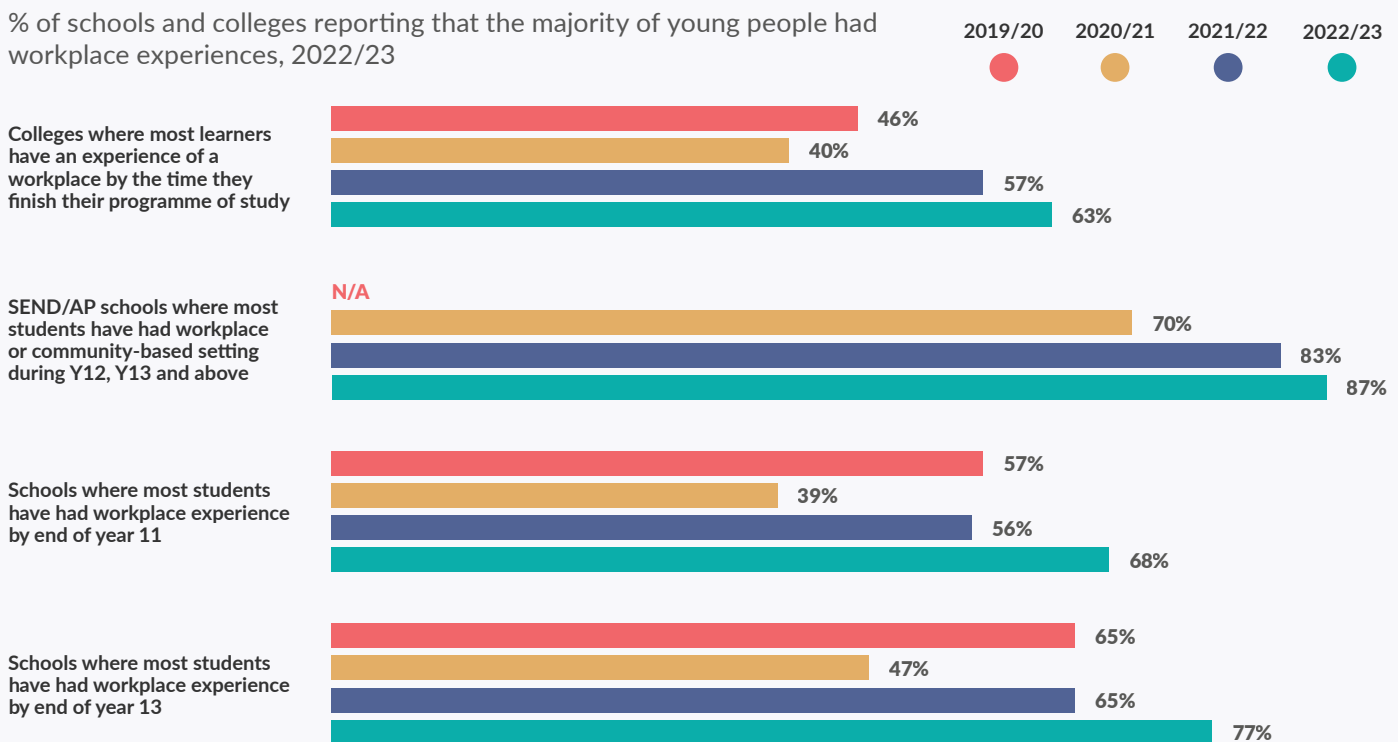
42 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Insight briefing: Student career readiness in 2022/23](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

43 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [From outreach to intake: Employer Standards for Careers Education](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

Workplace experiences – when carefully planned and linked to wider careers programmes - are a powerful way in which students can develop skills and prepare for future application processes. Definitions of work experience and measures of student participation vary. A review of various sources appears to show recent improvement. Historic recall surveys, which include those who passed through education some time ago, show that around a third of learners reported having work experience. The available evidence from 2022 focussed exclusively on younger learners, who are in the system now, shows a consensus that the percentage of young people accessing workplace experiences by the end of Year 11 was higher - between 56% and 69%.<sup>44,45</sup> Coverage on the ground is improving all the time. Last year the number of institutions providing experiences increased across all institution types, exceeding pre-Covid levels (Fig. 10).



**Fig. 10: Workplace experiences now exceed pre-Covid levels in mainstream schools, special schools, colleges and Alternative Provision**



Source: CEC academic year-end Compass data (2020/21 n=3,893; 2021/22 n=4,200; 2022/23 n=4,534)

The challenge now is to ensure workplace experiences are equitable, reflect modern working practices and have measurable impact for young people and employers. We are currently working with partners to reinvent work experience with a focus on disadvantaged young people and key, growing sectors. We are developing a new, three stage model that sees experiences build on each other through the course of a young person's time in secondary school and have a clear link to key skills.<sup>46</sup>

44 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2022). [Insight briefing - Gatsby Benchmark results 2021/2022](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London. 56% of schools and colleges were providing a workplace experience for the majority (76-100%) of their students.

45 Speakers for Schools (2022). [Work Experience for All: Exploring the impacts of work experience on young people's outcomes](#). Speakers for Schools: London. 66% of 18-30 year-olds could not recall doing any work experience between the ages of 16-18. 69% of 14-16 year-olds however recalled participating in any type of work experience 1, 2, 3 or 4 times.

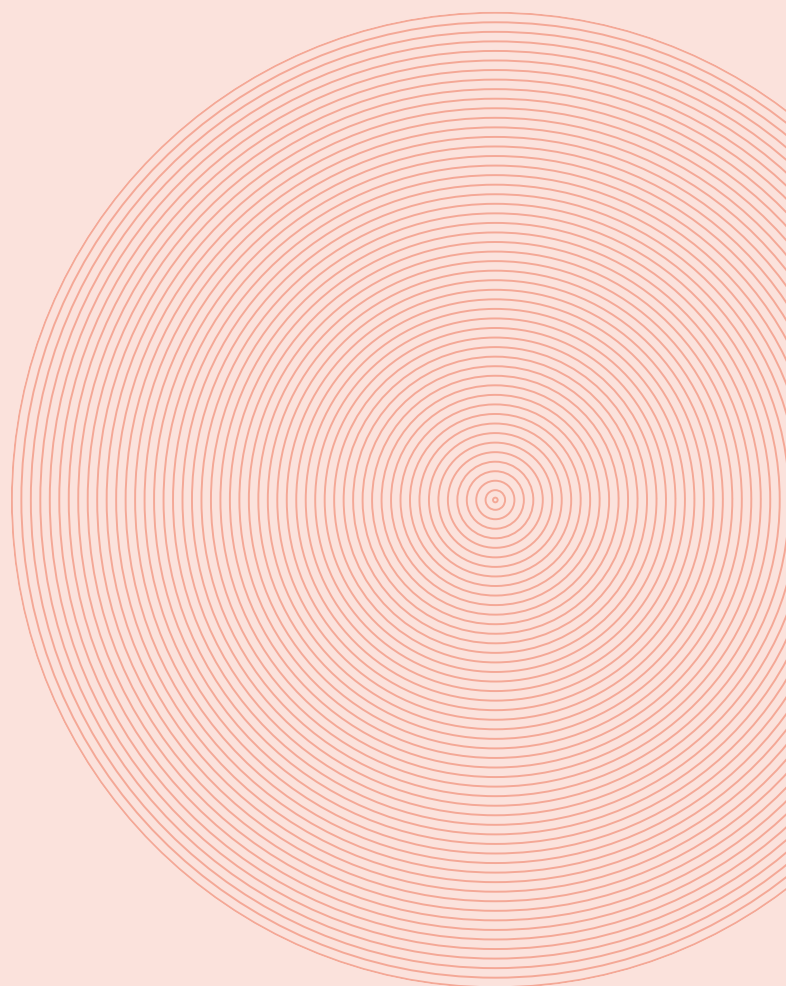
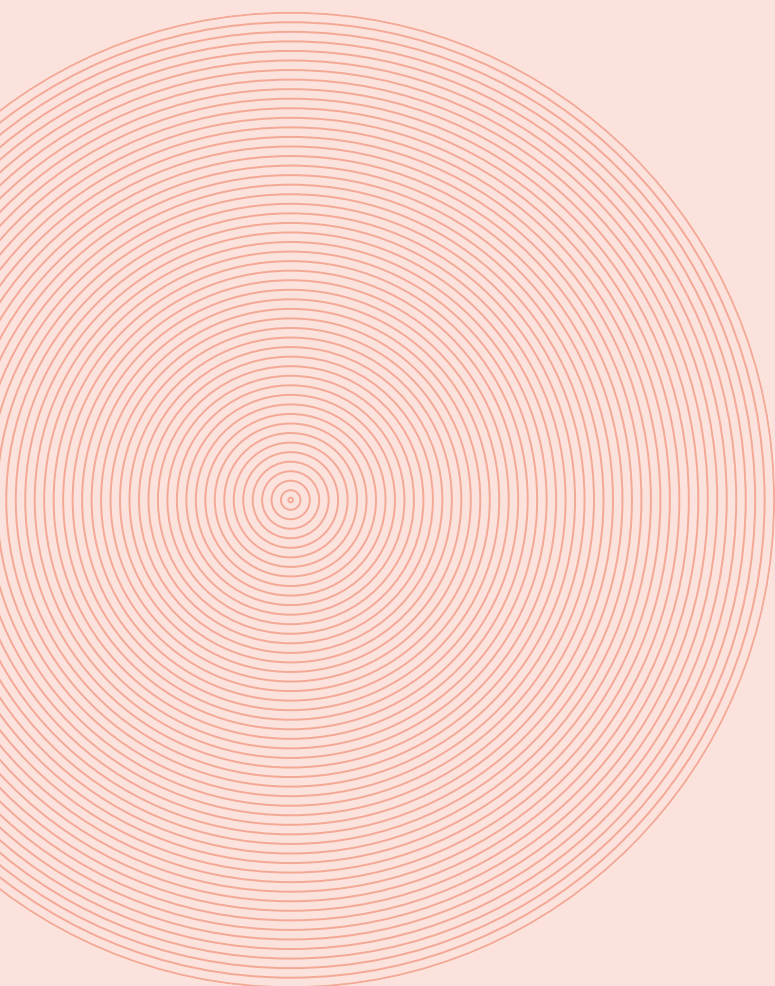
46 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2024). [Reinventing work experience](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

## Insight 3

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# Closing the gap:

Careers education helps tackle disadvantage; there remain barriers to equity



# Insight 3

## Closing the gap: Careers education helps tackle disadvantage; there remain barriers to equity

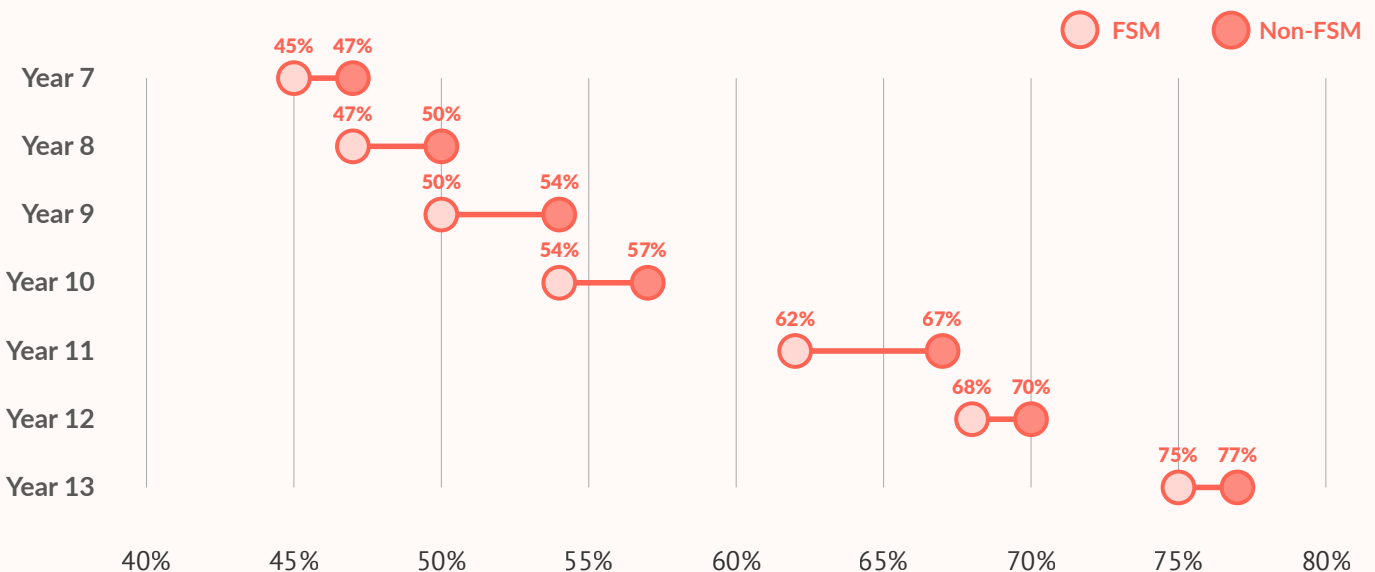
The transition between education and the world of work is not the same for every young person. In the context of careers education, some face more barriers than others, whether linked to economic context, gender, ethnic background or educational need. The characteristics of young people and the different barriers they face can intersect in complex ways, reinforcing or offsetting existing disadvantage. Whatever outcome measure - educational attainment, wellbeing, employment - the role of economic status is evident. In this section, we explore the gap between the readiness of the economically advantaged and disadvantaged young people to enter the world of work and the role of careers education in closing it.

### There is a gap in career readiness between the most and least economically disadvantaged young people – but gender is an important factor too

Across every year group, students receiving Free Schools Meals (FSM)<sup>47</sup> have, on average, lower career readiness than their peers. The gap between students in receipt of FSM remains consistent across year groups, with students in receipt of FSM scoring between two and five percentage points lower than their more 'advantaged' peers. This gap is highest for Year 11 students, when students are preparing for their next step (Fig. 11).

**Fig. 11: Across every year group, economically disadvantaged students have, on average, lower career readiness than their peers**

Average career readiness score calculated as the average % of questions students responded positively to, by FSM status



Source: Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), 2022/23 academic year (FSM n=19,793; non-FSM n=79,666)

<sup>47</sup> We recognise that receipt of Free School Meals is an imperfect measure of economic disadvantage. However, as a consistently recorded and widely used measure it allows comparison between previous FSQ analysis and other external reports.



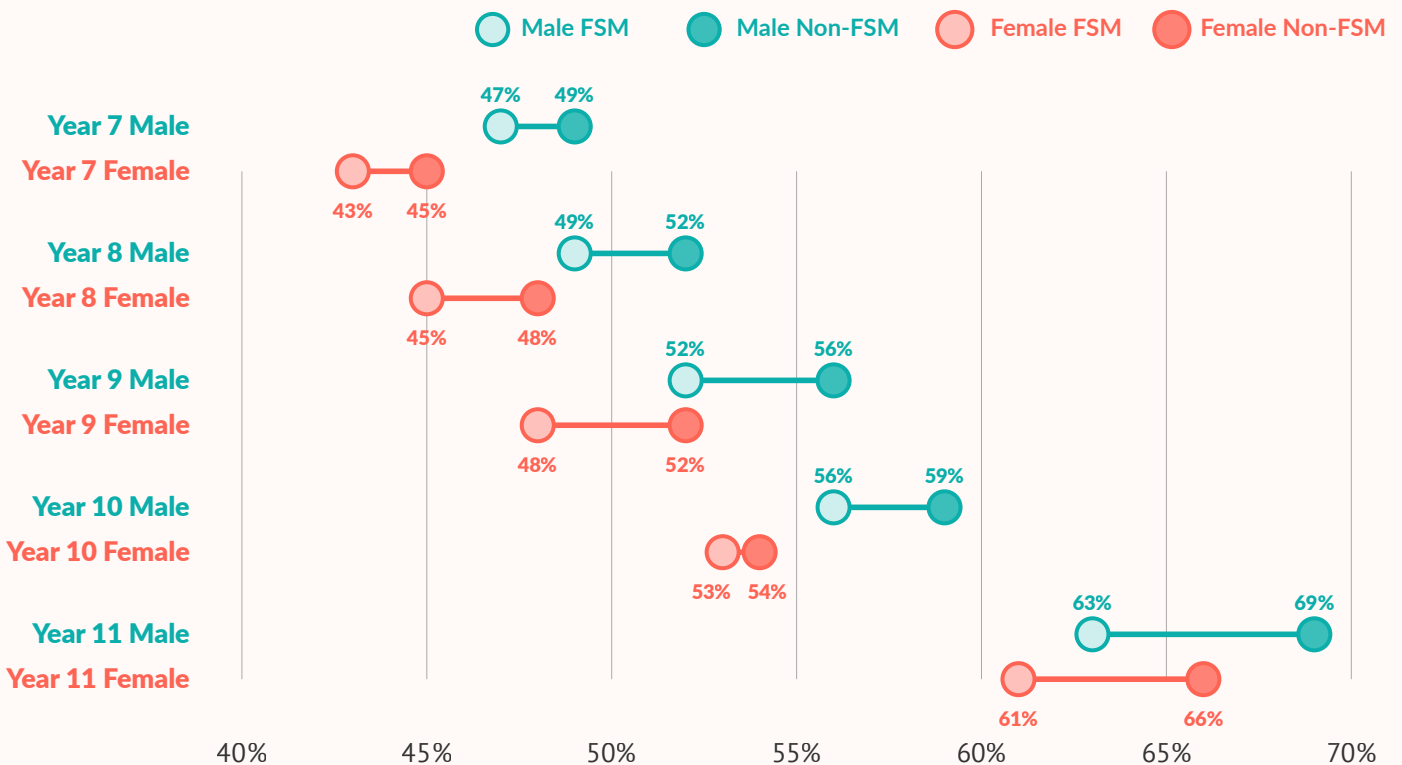
The largest gap was observed in relation to students' deeper understanding of the A-level pathway. In particular, non-FSM students were more likely to report understanding A-Levels to a great extent (51%), compared to their peers receiving FSM (35%). Differences in understanding of apprenticeships, T-levels and other vocational routes (such as BTECs) were not prominent.

There were also gaps on questions related to transition, specifically planning the next step and confidence. Four in five (82%) non-FSM students report having a plan for their next step after Year 11, compared to three-quarters (75%) of students receiving FSM.

However, the relationship between economic disadvantage and career readiness is complex, with gender an important factor. Beyond impacting on students' industry interests (see Insight 2), gender is an important factor influencing students' career readiness. Across every year group female students score, on average, lower than their male peers. With the exception of Year 11 students, this was true regardless of their FSM status, pointing to the need for increasing sophistication and specificity of careers support at the school and college level (Fig. 12).

**Fig. 12: Gender is an important factor influencing students' career readiness**

Year 7-11 students' career readiness scores, by FSM status and gender



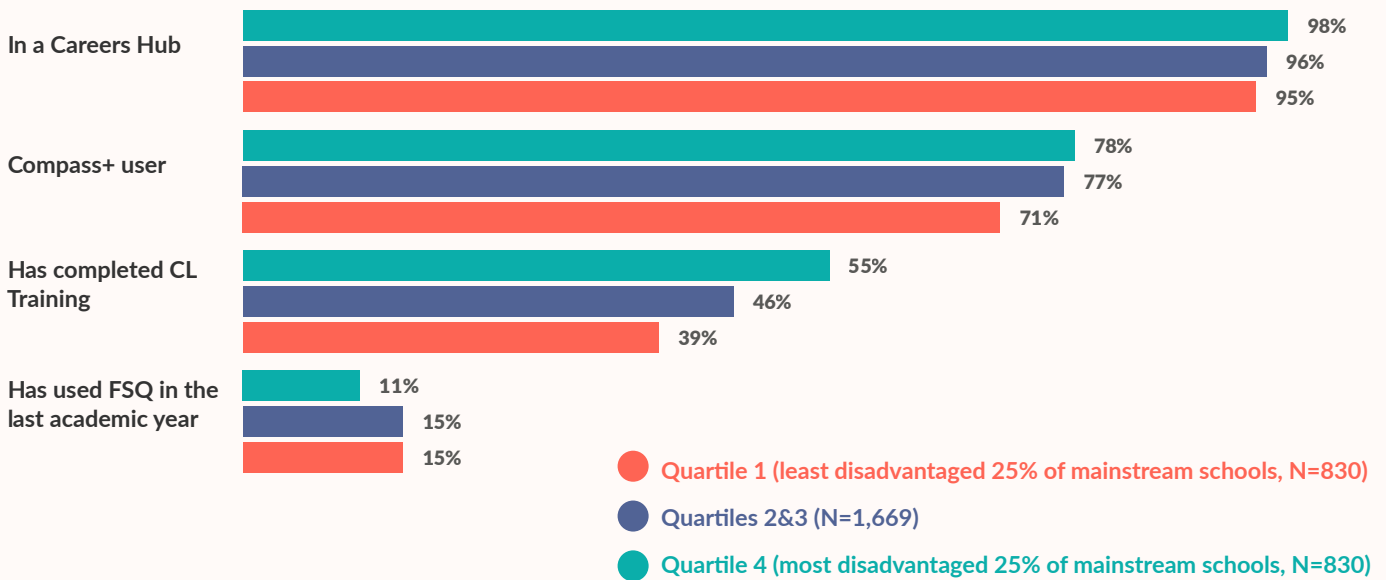
Source: Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ), 2022/23 academic year (FSM n=19,793; non-FSM n=79,666)

## Good careers provision can overwhelm the starting disadvantage gap by meeting young people's individual needs

The schools serving the most disadvantaged students show strong engagement with the careers system, with scope to use the Compass+ digital system, especially FSQ, more (Fig. 13).

**Fig. 13: Schools serving the most disadvantaged students are showing the strongest engagement with the careers system**

% of mainstream schools in a Careers Hub, Compass+ user, completing CLT and supporting students to use FSQ, 2022/23



Source: CEC academic year-end Compass data, end of July 2023 (n=3,329)

This is encouraging as the number of ways in which schools and colleges engage with the system is related to the quality of careers education (see Insight 1). The most engaged schools have, on average, the highest quality careers provision. Our data show that the most disadvantaged schools have made significant improvements to their careers provision over the last five years (achieving 3.2 additional benchmarks), similar to all mainstream schools.

Good careers provision improves students' career readiness and can outweigh the disadvantage associated with being in receipt of FSM (Infographic 3). A student in a school providing the highest quality career provision (as measured by achieving all eight Gatsby Benchmarks) would have a career readiness score 3.5%pts higher than a student in a school achieving only one Gatsby Benchmark.<sup>48</sup> Such provision is estimated to more than compensate for the average disadvantage associated with being in receipt of FSM (students in receipt of FSM typically score 1.5%pts lower than students not in receipt of FSM) (Infographic 3).

<sup>48</sup> There were no schools in the sample achieving zero benchmarks.



### Infographic 3: Good careers provision has the potential to close the career readiness gap experienced by young people in receipt of Free School Meals

%pts difference in career readiness score between young people receiving FSM compared with those not receiving FSM; %pts difference in career readiness score of young people attending schools achieving all eight Gatsby Benchmarks compared with schools achieving only one benchmark.

Disadvantage in career readiness score for students receiving free school meals

**-1.5%pts**

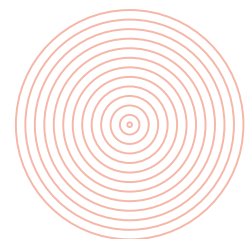
**+3.5%pts**

Positive impact on student career readiness score from being in a school with all 8 Gatsby benchmarks

Source: Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) 2022/23 academic year. Year 10 & Year 11 (n= 26,158)

### Closing the gap requires equity in careers provision, providing young people facing additional barriers with tailored experiences, learning from positive experience with SEND institutions.

Evidence shows us that high quality careers education improves students' career readiness and can overcome disadvantage. The central mission of raising the quality of provision in all institutions remains paramount. However, closing the gap also requires tailored support to groups experiencing additional barriers. We are seeing some progress here. 95% of schools and colleges reported they were challenging stereotypical thinking relating to careers; 97% were actively seeking to raise the aspirations of all their students; and 97% were working proactively with their Local Authority and career advisers around the career guidance and progression of vulnerable and SEND students.<sup>49</sup> It is also encouraging that the schools serving the most disadvantaged cohorts are deploying careers advisers to deliver more personal guidance for young people (82% fully achieving Gatsby Benchmark 8 - Personal Guidance, compared to an average of 75% for all institutions).<sup>50</sup>



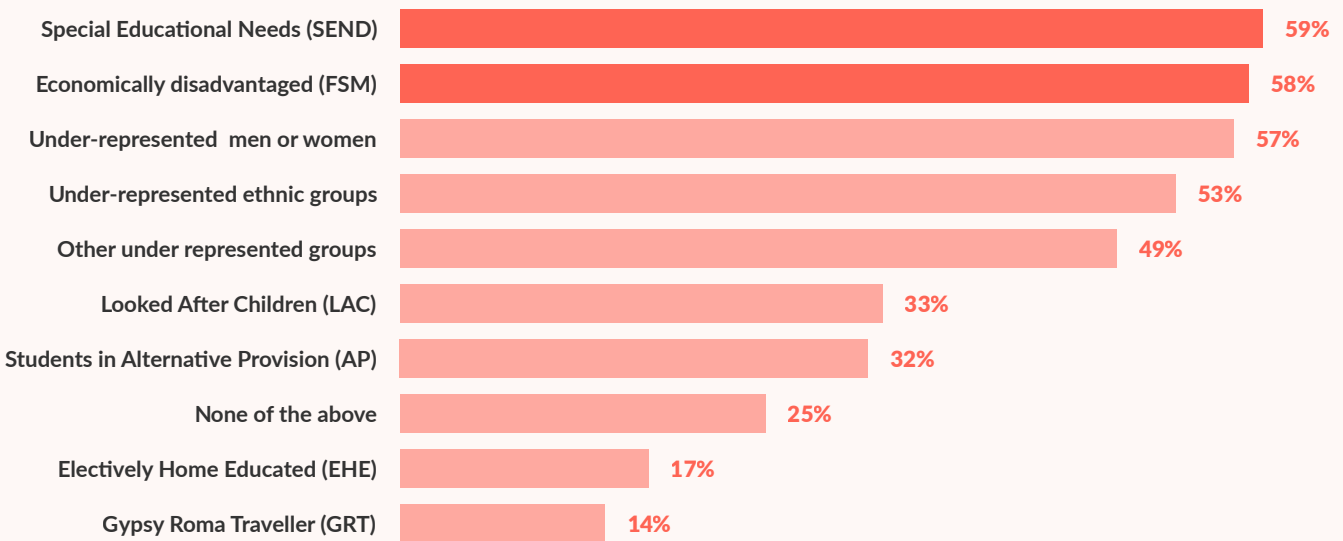
49 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Insight briefing: Gatsby Benchmark results for 2022/23](#). The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

50 The Careers & Enterprise Company (2023). [Insight briefing: Gatsby Benchmark results for 2022/23](#). Data tables. The Careers & Enterprise Company: London.

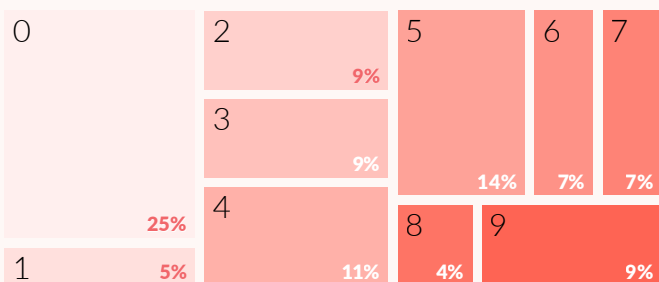
Employers are making a difference too. Data suggest their careers activity already supports an inclusive vision, with 75% targeting at least one group of students facing additional barriers.<sup>51</sup> Employers were most likely to target young people with SEND (59%) closely followed by economically disadvantaged students (58%) (Fig. 14). Although of course there is more to do to target a wider range of cohorts.

**Fig. 14: Employers are most likely to target young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and those who are economically disadvantaged**

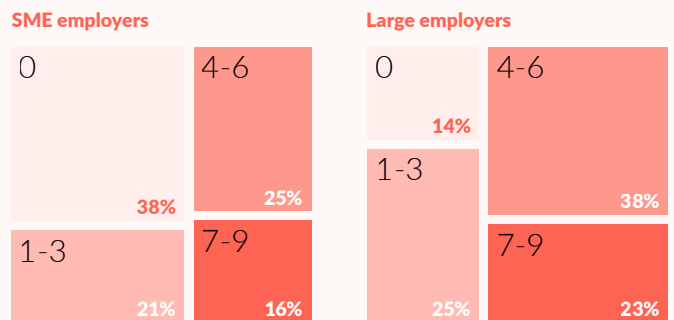
% employers targeting each group facing additional barriers and number of groups targeted, 2022/23



Number of groups targeted, all employers



Number of groups targeted by employer size



Source: CEC Employer Standards Self-Assessment responses, Apr-Sep 2023 (n=342)

There is scope to learn from institutions outside the mainstream, such as those that offer specialist provision to students with SEND. Special schools achieve well on the Gatsby Benchmarks (5.6/8 - above the national average) and outperform the mainstream when it comes to workplace experiences and interactions with further and higher education.<sup>52</sup> These are both crucial for accessing pathways and helping young people transition to work or further training. The special school model places emphasis on securing positive destinations by working on a multi-agency, partnership basis.

More systematic use of data can also enable better early identification of all barriers to effective transition. Through further developing our digital system to include tools that enable early intervention, we can identify young people at risk of becoming NEET with greater precision.





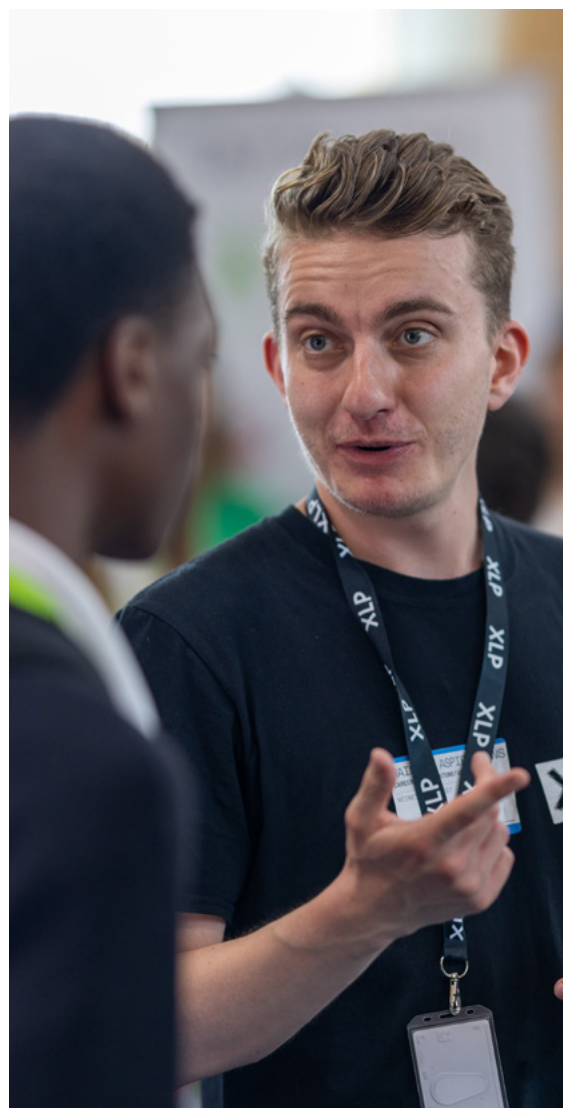
# Where next for the careers education system?

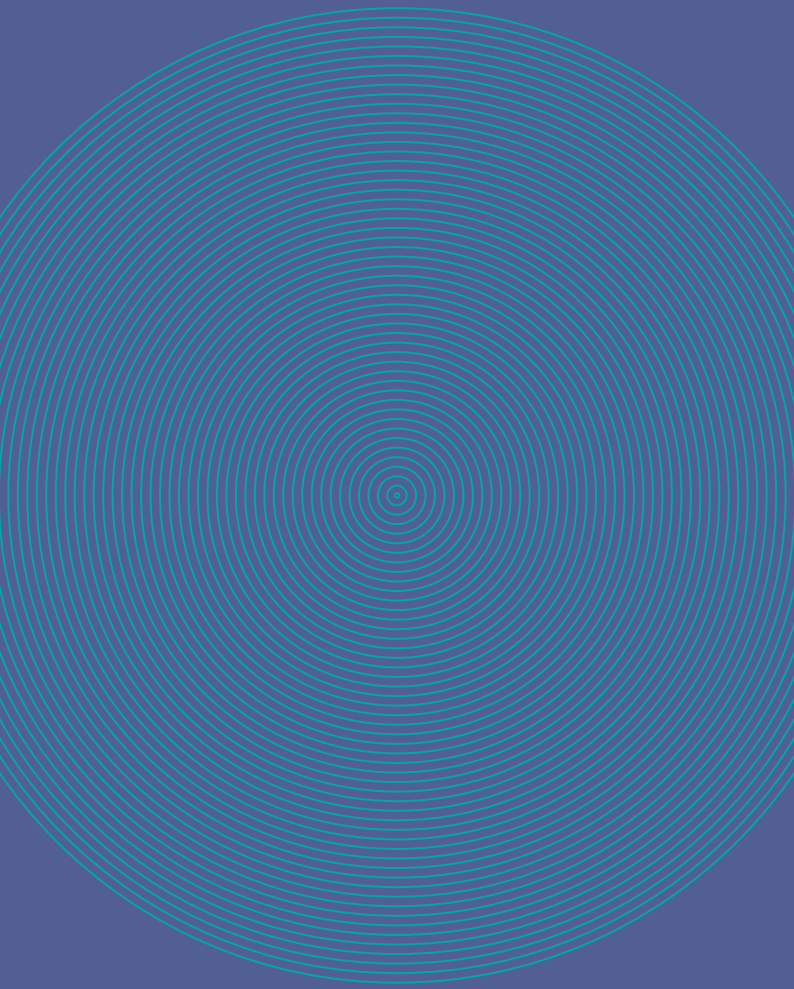
This report has outlined significant progress in building the careers system, improving provision and securing better outcomes. It draws on the most comprehensive data set to date, showcasing the potential of data to identify opportunities for improvements throughout the system.

Today we see both that more young people are getting the 21<sup>st</sup> century careers education they need... and there is more to do.

By focusing on five next steps, we hope to achieve greater impact:

1. **Coverage to quality** – By delivering quality for everyone, everywhere we will make progress in closing the disadvantage gap. Our evidence-based Careers Impact System – a peer and expert review process – will help schools and colleges improve quality and will allow policy makers to be confident that this improvement is continuing.
2. **Outreach to intake** – This means focusing on the activities that are most likely to get young people into jobs. For all businesses, our Employer Standards tool helps raise the quality of interactions. The tool is particularly useful for helping small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to target scarce resources effectively. The data will help inform employer engagement at sector and regional level.
3. **Interest to uptake** – This means extending our work with partners to tackle barriers to young people's progression onto apprenticeships and other technical pathways with an emphasis on growth sectors. Our Apprenticeships and Technical Education Transitions Framework helps us do this region by region.
4. **Margins to mainstream** – This means reinventing work experience, so that it is ongoing, connected to key skills and has measurable impact for young people and employers. At its most ambitious this also means linking careers to enrichment activities and supporting teachers and parents to play a more confident role in careers education. Providers of initial teacher training are adding careers awareness modules to their offer. Teacher Encounters is being trialled as a part of initial teacher training.
5. **Most to all** – We need to upskill the careers workforce to be as inclusive as possible, supporting all those who work with disadvantaged young people – SENCOs, safeguarding professionals, Pupil Premium leads – to have confident careers conversations. We need to continue to engage with and learn from institutions outside the mainstream (SEND and AP). We also need to develop our digital system to include tools that enable early intervention, including identifying young people at risk of becoming NEET with greater precision.





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